Environmental Ethics in High Risk Societies

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Disposition

Introduction

I. Approaches and topics in environmental ethics

II. Environmental ethics in the societal context

III. Environmental ethics and public responsibility

I. Approaches and topics in environmental ethics

As a reflective science, ethics examines the foundations of a good, successful life and the reasons on which people do or should base their behavior and actions. In this respect, ethics – qua theory – always has a descriptive (empirical) and an evaluative (normative) side.

Topics of Environmetal Ethics

- Ecological ethics: the ethics of "natural" ecosystems in interaction with human activities.

- Resource ethics: raw materials, energy, transport, climate, water, air.

- Animal (protection) ethics: dealing with animals (husbandry, use, killing).

- Conservation ethics: the protection of human and non-human nature (health, prevention, risk minimization).

II. Environmental ethics in the societal context

Environmental ethics springs from insight into significant (at times life-threatening) risks, is dependent on broad public debate, and requires political support (quite against resistance) and legal regulation.

Basic Principles of Environmental Ethics

- the principle of doing no harm – a basic tenet of all medical ethics;

- the "Golden Rule," i.e. the rule, common to all cultures, of reciprocity for all forms of human action;

- the rule of generalization, as formulated in Kant's "categorical imperative" ("Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"); and

- the intergenerational, future-oriented variant of the categorical imperative (Hans Jonas: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of real human life on earth").

III. Environmental ethics and public responsibility

- Principle of damage limitation and minimization
- Principle of „*tutiorism*"
- Principle of interconnection: cross-sectional problems that affect society as a whole.

Multiple environmental ethical co-responsibilities

- Integrity of researchers and institutions
- Self-criticism – promoting external scrutiny
- Accountability to the public sphere